

The Reverend Andrew Lothian 1763-1831

United Secession Minister

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In September 1820 the Edinburgh Presbytery of the United Secession Church met for the first time, bringing together in wary brotherhood two of the four branches into which the 1733 Secession had divided itself. The "New Light" wings of the Burgher and Antiburgher synods had made the momentous discovery that whereas prudence, common interest and even common sense impelled them towards re-union, no ecclesiastical microscope in Scotland was powerful enough to detect a scruple sufficient to keep them longer apart (a course which many, in their hearts, would probably much have preferred). Although Scotland had to wait another twenty-three years for the most catastrophic of all its ecclesiastical disruptions, in 1820 the New Light Seceders gave to the world the first hint that Scotland was also capable of pioneering efforts in a contrary direction.

Of the thirty ministers in the United Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh, eighteen were former Burghers and twelve were Antiburghers; and this rather more than reflected the proportions of the two parties in the all-Scotland synod, where the figures were 139 and 123 respectively.¹ Something is known of the character of the founding fathers of the United Secession in and around Edinburgh. The first moderator of the presbytery, for example, was the venerable Dr James Hall, ordained in 1777, a *Biographical Sketch* of whose life and labours appeared in 1827.² Dr James Peddie, another Burgher and minister of the Bristo Street congregation, was the subject of an enthusiastic *Memoir* by his son, who also published a selection of his father's *Discourses* in 1846.³ Dr John Brown, who succeeded Hall at the Rose Street Chapel two years after the union, and died in 1858 after a stormy theological career, embroiled in the atonement controversy, represents a slightly younger generation. A *Memoir* of his life was written by Principal Cairns.⁴

¹ Scottish Record Office, CH3/111/22; Minutes of Edinburgh United Secession Presbytery 1820-27; National Library of Scotland, Minutes of United Associate Synod, 1820-40.

² *Biographical Sketch of the Life and Labours of that Eminent Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: The Reverend James Hall, D.D.* (Paisley, 1827).

³ W. Peddie, *Discourses of the late Rev. James Peddie, D.D., with a Memoir of his Life* (Edinburgh, 1846).

⁴ J. Cairns, *Memoir of John Brown, D.D.*, (Edinburgh 1860); A. R. MacEwan, *Life and Letters of John Cairns*, 4th edn. (London, 1898), 407.

From such sources it is possible to form a composite portrait of a typical Secession minister in the early nineteenth century; but it would also be a highly misleading one. Almost all the surviving memoirs belong to a characteristic genre of ecclesiastical biography which borders on hagiography. Almost without exception, Secession ministers appear to have exhibited a precocious sanctity; and after lives of exemplary piety and pastoral usefulness, resigned themselves to an edifying and carefully chronicled deathbed. All, in their younger days, were model students; and when they had occasion to engage in public controversy or theological debate it was always with becoming decorum and on the side of the angels. All were surrounded by a penumbra of equally saintly relatives, and this posed a problem for their biographers; it was hard not to tread on the corns of a host of relations by marriage. The Secession ministry was a remarkably tight kinship-group. James Hall, for example (first moderator of the presbytery) was the brother of the Secession minister in Kelso, and their three sisters were all married to Seceder ministers. Dr Peddie married the daughter of one minister and was the brother-in-law of another. Thomas Brown, who sat in the 1820 presbytery as Burgher minister at Dalkeith, was related to George Brown of North Berwick; and they were joined in 1822 by George's elder brother John, also of the Burgher persuasion. It is perhaps not surprising that within this charmed circle criticism was muted. Its members were expected to conform to a certain stereotype, and it tended to become a mutual-admiration society.

If one turns to the composite portrait of a Secession minister painted, as it were, from the outside, something very different emerges. Posterity has imposed its own stereotype, and it is much less flattering. A recent historian has spoken of "their devotion and responsibility", but set this over against the "obstinacy and total lack of any sense of the communal nature of the Christian Church" of "this cantankerous if pious people".⁵ W. L. Mathieson, quoting some of the more negative pronouncements of the Antiburgher synod in the late eighteenth century, and the hair-splitting of the Burghers over their own New Light/Old Light controversy in 1805, suggests that "if traces of incipient culture were not unknown amongst the Seceders, they were promptly suppressed".⁶ H. G. Graham admits that "in the course of time there were in the ranks of the Seceders men of considerable learning, of no little ability; possessed of the saving grace of humour to temper their old-fashioned dogmas", but accused them in general of fostering division and dogmatism among the people,

5 A. L. Drummond & J. Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843* (Edinburgh, 1973), 142.

6 W. L. Mathieson, *The Awakening of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1910), 234.

and concluded that in general their clergy were rustic and uncouth, scantily educated and backward looking.⁷ It would not be unfair to suggest that this remains the popular view. At best, the Seceders carried forward into the nineteenth century an austere witness to what they regarded as the fundamental insights of Calvinism, together with an uncompromising ethical system, a valid if extreme critique of prevailing tendencies in other Churches and a vision of a nation peculiarly called to righteousness, with serious political overtones which the wealthy, the powerful and the worldly-wise were boldly invited to hear and ponder. At worst, on the popular view, they were an anachronism within a developing and modernising nation: a sub-culture divorced from the realities of their time, left behind in a theological world of their own, stressing as "Gospel" things which were irrelevant to the proclamation of Christ in contemporary Scotland.

This latter picture is hard to reconcile with the facts, and not least with the sheer size of the Secession at the turn of the century. As far back as 1765, it had been alleged that 100,000 persons adhered to the various non-established communities in Scotland. In 1795, the Lord Advocate estimated the figure to be 150,000.⁸ In 1820, the United Secession alone had some 250 charges, comprising about 10,000 souls; and when we take into account the continuing Old Light Burghers and Antiburghers, the sizeable Relief Synod and the Cameronians, dissent in Scotland can by no means be written off as a backwater. Nor, for that matter, can its ministry be dismissed as a mere ghetto of survivors from a bye-gone age. One of the major problems facing the United Secession in the 1820s was finding scope for the energies of a host of eager young ordinands.

A historian today, influenced by current socio-economic interests and equipped with another set of tools, would wish to ask a different set of questions. In attempting to construct the profile of a Secession clergyman at the beginning of the nineteenth century he would try to avoid generalisation and instead make a series of case-studies. He would wish to investigate the social and economic bearings of the man, and he would hope to chart his intellectual and cultural development. He would be concerned with his response to the group with whom he stood in a professional relationship; and he would welcome any light on his political affiliations and presuppositions. He would have to try to see all this against a background of social change—indeed polarisation—brought about partly by a period of war and partly by a

⁷ H. G. Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London 1901), 381.

⁸ The former figure was frequently cited at the time of the 1766 Schism Overture in the General Assembly. For the latter figure, see National Library of Scotland, Melville Papers, vol. 8 no. 203, Robert Dundas of Arniston to R. S. Dundas, M.P., 14 November 1807.

process of industrialisation and urbanisation which had set up complex cross-currents in Scotland. In the ecclesiastical sphere, he would have to take account of the closely-related problems of the disintegration of the Moderate régime in the Established Church; the gathering strands of what is loosely called the evangelical revival, which cut across previously well-marked boundaries; and the infiltration of ideas and attitudes which put a question-mark against older formulations of doctrine and theological priorities.

In this paper an attempt is made, on a very modest scale, to offer one such "case-study". It has been made possible by the discovery of a box of assorted family papers (more tantalizing for the gaps they reveal than for the information they supply) and the meagre printed references to a man who would otherwise have remained in total obscurity.⁹

At that first meeting of the newly formed United Secession Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1820, the Reverend Andrew Lothian sat as minister of the Burgher congregation of Portsburgh. He had been a member of the negotiating-committee of the Associate Synod; and on 8th September had attended the inaugural meeting of the new synod and was appointed to the committee of funds for the united Church.

Until his death in 1831, Lothian's name appears regularly among the small group of ministers and elders who did the Church's donkey-work behind the scenes. In 1821, he was a member of the committee charged with drawing up regulations for the guidance of the principal of the theological hall, then undergoing problems of "integration". Later the same year he was appointed to the committees considering clergy widows' annuities and the salary of the synod clerk. As collector of a synodal levy of five shillings per annum on local congregations, he complained about the difficulties he encountered, and was thanked annually for his labours by colleagues who were fortunate enough to have escaped this particular chore. In 1824, he undertook delicate negotiations for the purchase of the Robertsonian Library for the theological hall—a collection of books whose value he privately regarded with some scepticism. In 1825, he convened a committee of supply for the Albany Chapel in London (which came under the synod's purview): this was in fact a euphemism for some tactful mopping up of a scandal which had recently occurred there. In 1827, Lothian was one of those appointed to supervise the publication of the synod's *Revised Testimony* (itself a skilful exercise in theological readjustment by the two wings of the united Church) and there is perhaps just a whiff of nepotism in the fact that the printer turns out to be Lothian's son John.

9 The Lothian family papers, contained in a deed-box at present in my custody. All MS. sources cited hereafter form part of this collection unless otherwise specified.

At the meeting of the synod in May 1828, Lothian's name was on the leet for moderator; and in September he was elected to the chair "by a majority of votes" from a leet of four. As such elections were usually unanimous, there seems to have been more to this episode than meets the eye; but at the end of a long ministry Lothian was able to enjoy the highest honour which his Church had to offer, and it was presumably the reward for faithful if unspectacular service. He seems to have been that familiar phenomenon, the good committee man and willing horse.

When Lothian died, on 24th January 1831, his obsequies were performed by a consortium of ministerial colleagues, all drawn from his own Church. Many more wrote (on decorous black-edged paper) to console the family; and a paragraph appeared in *The Edinburgh Advertiser* extolling Lothian's benevolence, public-spirit and "enlightenment".¹⁰

Three passages in this otherwise anodyne obituary stand out. Lothian was esteemed, it was said, for the "copious, flowing and eloquent" style of his preaching; though his manner was "more energetic than graceful" and his discourses were "occasionally characterised by peculiar views". Secondly, "his vast stores of knowledge" were reflected in his inexhaustible powers of conversation. "Acquainted with almost every branch of literature, science and theology, willing to communicate to others what he knew, happy in contributing to their entertainment, and fond of discussion, he was a most instructive and delightful companion". Thirdly, he was remembered for "his wise counsels and conciliatory manner" which had helped to "preserve the unity" of the Church, "and extend its influence over the country". In sum, he was a man of "vigorous mind . . . extensive information . . . peculiarly bland manners and benevolent disposition". All this perhaps could be paraphrased by suggesting that Lothian had done sterling work for the United Secession Church in difficult times, was a hard-working parish minister, a bit of an old bore, and inclined to parade crotchets in the pulpit. He certainly displayed a passionate love of factual information on a variety of subjects; and was never loath to impart his learning to others. His was a forceful personality, but he was saved from pomposity by a genuine desire to put his talents at the service of others. The tablet erected to his memory by his congregation gives a hint of this:

"With the energy of a mind richly gifted by nature; with the zeal of one who himself believed and felt the importance of his message; with the fearlessness and faithfulness which the manliness of his character combined with a sense of duty to inspire; and with an affectionate earnestness, in which the

¹⁰ *The Edinburgh Advertiser*, 1 Feb. 1831 p. 71.

benevolence of his disposition was beautifully blended with the conscientious solicitude of a Minister of Christ; did he discharge for the period of thirty-eight years the duties of the Holy Ministry''.¹¹

The one quality which neither the *Advertiser* nor the author of the memorial dared to hint at, because it would not fit the stereotype, was a sense of humour. This was Lothian's most endearing quality, but it had to be censored from the official public record.

Andrew Lothian was born in 1763 at Cowdenbeath in Fife. His own account of his early years is worth quoting, being somewhat unexpected:

"From six years of age, my desire was that I might be a minister of the Gospel. My father thought himself unable to afford me the requisite education. For a while I submitted in silence, but with great reluctance, to what seemed my hard fortune. My parents, though at that time poor, still, so far as they could, indulged my passion for learning. A young seaman came to attend our school. He told me how he had made some money by taking out and bringing home some goods. Desire of similar success in the same way, and with a view to the prosecution of my education for the ministry, instantly sprung up in my breast. . . . Having at last, though with great difficulty, obtained the consent of my parents, I went to sea, concealing from them and from everyone, my ultimate object, until the wonderful kindness of Providence seemed to have brought it within my reach. In every little adventure I was successful. I bought and read books with the greatest avidity. When I had been four years at sea, I returned to school possessed now of considerable means of going forward in my studies. Although by this time my father had begun to prosper in the world, and would have been able to assist me, yet the blessing of Providence on my own exertions rendered all pecuniary aid from others unnecessary. The Reverend David Greig of Lochgelly, under whose pastoral care I had the happiness to be placed, put into my hands, about this time, the letters of the late reverend and excellent Mr Newton of Olney, in which the story of his sea adventures in his youth is told in a very striking and interesting manner''.¹²

Lothian began to wonder if his thoughts of ordination might not be presumptuous. "Tempting offers", he says, "were made to me if I would return to sea"; but a renewed perusal of Newton decided

11 A copy of the wording on the Memorial Tablet is amongst the Lothian Papers.

12 A. Lothian, *The Christian Patriot, and Seamen's Friend* (Edinburgh, 1822), 37f.

him. He pursued his studies "with a view to the sacred office", and in 1788 enrolled at the Associate Synod's divinity hall.

Here then is a determined young Scot doggedly making his way up in the world, and exhibiting the classical Calvinist ethic of self-help backed by commercial acumen, in pursuit of a predetermined goal. When assailed by doubts, providence took a hand. Education was, for Lothian as for so many like him in the eighteenth century, the means of escape from the milieu into which he had been born.

The years at sea were by no means wasted. Nautical allusions recur in his sermons, and on at least one occasion he indulges in a most romantic description of a storm at sea (from which of course properly edifying lessons were drawn). He retained a lifelong concern for seamen and their families, and was one of the moving spirits behind the Edinburgh and Leith Seamen's Friend Society. In 1821 he delivered the inaugural discourse in the Society's new project, the Floating Chapel at Leith Docks. The magistrates had assigned it a convenient situation in the harbour; and with that liberality of spirit which his obituarist was later to stress, he rejoiced that the aquatic Bethel was "prepared and opened, not by any sect, or for the little purposes of any party, but by those of every name, rank and condition, who, from the great motives of humanity, religion, morality and patriotism, are Seamen's Friends".

Lothian's maritime interlude also enables us to catch a glimpse of his personal appearance. In March 1780, the Lords of the Admiralty, headed by Lord Sandwich, issued from their Leith office a certificate of exemption from the press-gang to "Andrew Lawden", who having "never used the Sea before that Time" had bound himself apprentice to serve at sea for three years. He is described in the margin as "about 17 years of age, of a Black complexion and about 5 feet 5 inch high and wears his own dark brown hair."

At this point there is a gap in our knowledge of Lothian's career. Principal Cairns, in his *Memoir* of Lothian's near contemporary John Brown, suggests that by the 1780s candidates for the Burgher ministry were only accepted after completion of a course of studies at a university.¹³ Class-cards still exist which suggest that Lothian attended Professor Dalziel's Greek class at Edinburgh in 1786, Dugald Stewart's moral philosophy class, and Robison's physics class in 1787. He must presumably have commenced his studies in 1785, and at some stage attended classes in Latin, logic and mathematics; but, like most others at that time, he did not take a degree. How he occupied himself between his return from the sea and his university career is not known.

13 Cairns, *op. cit.*, 24.

The Burgher divinity hall, which Lothian entered in 1788, was not as grand as its name implied. The previous year Dr George Lawson, Secession minister at Selkirk, had been appointed professor in succession to John Brown of Haddington, and the "hall" moved from the manse at Haddington to that at Selkirk. Students were expected to attend for a session of six or eight weeks in the autumn, coinciding with the school holidays (since most of them supported themselves for the rest of the year as dominies), and took pot-luck in whatever portion of the five-year course was being offered that year. Systematic divinity and scriptural exegesis from the Hebrew and Greek texts formed the basis of the course, and church history was specifically excluded. Candidates delivered an annual discourse before the professor, and this was supplemented by regular examinations conducted by the home presbytery (in Lothian's case, Dunfermline).

Lothian has left no record of his annual visits to Selkirk. Presumably the students were boarded out on godly cottagers, as the manse could hardly have accommodated the fifty or so young men who were enrolled. A decade later, John Brown conceived an adulation for Lawson, "the Christian Socrates of Selkirk", who certainly seems to have been a remarkable man. He consistently supported the "New Light" trends within his Church, and "braved much obloquy in denouncing the tendency to idolize confessions of faith, and to stereotype the views of the Scottish Reformers and the Fathers of the Secession." A pamphlet which he published on this subject has been described as "one of the noblest assertions of Christian liberty in the whole history of Scottish Christianity"; and it may well be that at Selkirk Lothian imbibed the principles of charity and forbearance which later made him an enthusiastic architect of union among the seceders. Bathing in Ettrick Water, moonlight excursions to Melrose abbey and debates among the ordinands seem to have been a regular part of the curriculum, and somewhat modify our image of the life of a Secession divinity student.¹⁴

Lothian was licensed by Dunfermline Presbytery in November 1792, and early the following year (after a competing call from Lochwinnoch) he was ordained at Port Glasgow. The Burgher congregation there had recently been disjoined from Greenock, and a new church with 751 sittings was completed in 1791. The call was signed by seventy communicant members, and a further 358 "adhered". The stipend was £80.

With his family connexions in the east of Scotland, it is probable that Lothian regarded Port Glasgow as a stepping-stone

14 *Ibid.*, 32f. John Macfarlane, *The Life and Times of George Lawson, D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1862). The latter contains a number of references to Lothian, including the text of two letters from Lawson to Lothian.

to something nearer home. The opportunity came in 1796 when he received calls both from West Calder and the Portsburgh congregation in Edinburgh. The latter had a chequered history. It was originally an Antiburgher congregation and worshipped in an old Cameronian meeting-house in Lady Lawson's Close. A group, under their minister, adhered to the views of Smyton of Kilmaurs anent the "lifting" of the bread at the sacrament, and when the "Lifters" were condemned by the General Associate Synod in the 1780s they formed part of Symton's break-away presbytery until its collapse. They then joined the Relief Church briefly, and in 1791 were received into the Burgher fold. A chapel was erected in the Vennel in 1793, but their first minister, James Scott, died unexpectedly in 1795. A unanimous call, signed by 172 members and seventy-four "hearers" was extended to Lothian, with the offer of £100 and the rent of a dwelling; and he was duly settled on 22nd September 1796.¹⁵

The congregation certainly grew, not only in numbers but also, one suspects, in social status. 440 signed the call to his successor, and by 1831 they were able to offer their minister £210 p.a. The site of the church in the Vennel, just off the Grassmarket beside the old West Port, lay at the heart of a crowded and thriving artisan district of Edinburgh, with small-scale businesses, surprising little manufacturies tucked away in wynds and closes, and a vigorous street-life of the sort depicted in the more romantic prints of "old Edinburgh". After the turn of the century the area seems to have become rather more sleazy; and the indications are that folk were moving out, if they prospered, into the more spacious new housing to the south and west. Some time between 1804 and 1817 the Lothians moved into a solid family house at 41 Lauriston Place, on the corner of Lauriston Lane. It had a sizeable garden, and was handy both for the down-town Grassmarket and also for the meadows; and was genteel enough to be marked on the 1817 Kirkwood Survey as the property of "Revd Mr Lothian". Gentility, and the fact that his more wealthy hearers had come to regard the Vennel as no longer quite "nice", perhaps account for an attempt in 1818 to remove to more salubrious surroundings. The congregation proposed to build a new chapel in Lothian Road or Drummond Street; and since the Burghers were needing a new synod hall the Portsburgh folk offered to incorporate the needed facilities in return for a subsidy. The proposal was rejected, and

¹⁵ New College Library, Edinburgh, MS. vols., G. Brown, "List of students in the Divinity Hall of the United Secession Church from the Rise of the Secession till the year 1840", and "Alphabetical List of Congregations in the United Secession Church". Cf. also W. Mackelvie, *Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1873); R. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church, 1733-1900* (Edinburgh, 1904); J. McKerrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1839).

Lothian's flock reconciled themselves to the Vennel. In 1828, the existing chapel was re-built at a cost of £2,000, with 832 sittings. It was not until 1859 that they eventually managed to move to Lauriston Place, where a new church was built with 1,170 sittings at a cost of £6,000. The chapel in the Vennel continued in use as a "mission", and in 1860 it started life all over again with a congregation of forty-six. In two generations a whole congregation had moved up and out of the Grassmarket, leaving their old place of worship to a new clientele.

Little can be said about Lothian's relationship with his flock. They seem to have been deeply attached to him, and he to them; and if dissensions arose, evidence has not survived. There is one exception—a letter written to Lothian in 1817 by Andrew Carrick, a candlemaker, objecting to the appointment of one George Cochrane as an elder. Lothian has affectionately endorsed it, "Precious morsel from a precious fellow":

"Revd Sir,

During the many years I have sat under your ministry, I have always esteemed you as a faithful Minister of the Gospel and an indefatigable labourer in the vineyard of Christ. It is from this consideration that I take it upon me to lay before you a circumstance which has for some time past been to me a cause of no small degree of uneasiness, which arises from our late choice of an Elder. . . . The person I allude to is so far from being actuated by this first principle of Christianity . . . that he has borne towards me and the family to which I belong a spirit of malice and envy to the extreme, which he has sufficiently evinced by being chiefly instrumental in raising and maintaining against me . . . a most unjust Law Process, which I believe will only serve to expose his malicious spirit. . . . I shall only remark further that I shall be extremely sorry, if I am reduced to the necessity of leaving a Ministry under which I trust I have received much benefit. . . . Judge what my feelings must necessarily be, joining in the solemn ordinances of religion administered by an individual bearing towards me a spirit of implacable hatred. I shall leave these things to your serious consideration".

Every congregation has one such disgruntled soul, and no doubt Lothian had his own ways of dealing with him.

In the last year of his life Lothian was too ill to attend to his ministerial duties, but he did his best. An "intimation" survives from a few weeks before his death. It was "to be read distinctly and audibly by Mr McNeille to the congregation immediately after sermon this afternoon", to assure them that he was much recovered in health, but that he had been advised not to officiate at

the forthcoming joint celebration of the Lord's Supper with the Rose Street congregation. Instead, the Revd James Hooper of Leith was to dispense the Sacrament, and the Revd John McGilchrist was "to be his assistant and to preach on Saturday, Sabbath evening and Monday, and to exhort Tables". McGilchrist was also to distribute Communion tokens to both congregations, in the presence of the elders. Those who had applied for membership, "or who may have lines to give in with this view", were to be given their tokens separately in the session-house; and there was to be a special collection, "which it is hoped will be liberal", in aid of the Portsburgh library. Finally he adjured his own flock to do everything in their power "for the comfortable accommodation of their brethren of Rose Street, and all such other friends as may choose to attend."

Another rather touching document survives, written only days before his death, addressed to the kirk session. There was a small fund for the relief of the poor, and Lothian regretted that he had not been able to get about among his people to distribute it in person. He sent a list of worthy recipients, and begged that they might be assisted:

"To Janet Burns, Gosfords Close, Lawnmarket (To Miss Lee, 6 Bristo Street, I have sent by my daughter the sum of 5/-)	2/6
Mrs Leishman, Greenside Street, you might send	5/-
Mrs Patterson (Widow), 4 North Richmond Street	3/6
Mrs John Gray (a woman greatly needing and richly deserving aid in her affliction)	5/-"

And so on, through a list of many others. This is surely evidence of a faithful pastoral ministry, right up to the end.

When one turns to Lothian's sermons, there is certainly evidence of those "peculiar views" hinted at in his obituary in *The Advertiser*. He published two, and there are probably more hidden anonymously in the pages of *The Edinburgh Christian Instructor* to which he is known to have been a contributor. *Charity to the Poor and Afflicted, the Duty and Interest of the Prosperous* was printed in 1797 by desire of the Society for Relief of the Destitute Sick. It is a wooden affair for the most part, and the language is at times as stilted as that of a contemporary Moderate of the establishment; but he makes some telling points. Don't just give money to salve your own conscience: go and visit the poor in person! Don't concentrate on the good and virtuous poor: the unappealing and squalid may have needs and troubles even greater! Don't waste time discussing whether a man's poverty is the result of his own folly or sin: help him first and ask questions afterwards! The rich have artificial social mechanisms for coping with bereavement and loss: the poor have to face it point-blank! Although God has "appointed that

inequality which marks the condition of men, this He has done, not in caprice or severity, but to promote the wisest and best of purposes". God has placed men in their different stations, and a fearful judgement will befall those who fail in their duty to their humbler brethren. A powerful peroration contrasts human indifference with the out-going compassion of Christ, and the preacher ends with a reminder that charity is not just a duty but a matter of vital self-interest. Not only does it make you feel good now—there is a reward to be looked for hereafter. One wonders what an old-time Seceder like Adam Gib would have made of this: not only the Social Gospel, but something perilously like Filthy Rags of Righteousness?¹⁶

The circumstances in which *The Christian Patriot and Seamen's Friend* originated have already been examined. Published in 1822, it is a breezy collection of advice and exhortation addressed to young seafarers. No doubt mothers packed it hopefully in their sons' cabin trunks, and the young may even have relished its spiritual uplift when faced with the appalling marine catastrophes delineated by its author. It is seasoned with curious *obiter dicta*, the most bizarre being the apparent assumption that the recent Royal Marriage Act had been conceived as a primitive attempt at family planning. Lothian, on the contrary, is all in favour of the population explosion. India has plenty of room for more people, and when that resource fails it is high time the heathen Turks were "abated" to make room for civilised Christians.¹⁷

A large number of manuscript sermons have also survived, but those which are legible are also frankly extremely tedious. There are few anecdotes or illustrations, and the preacher grinds his way remorselessly through the formal Calvinist tenets, squeezing his texts dry to the last drop, and operating within a closed dogmatic system. There are flights of eloquence and pathos, but little of the man. This is presumably what his hearers wanted, and it is certainly what they got. There is a dichotomy between Lothian's formal pulpit dogma and the liberal outlook of the man.

More revealing, perhaps, are the ways in which Lothian took his part in the life of the wider Church, and the city. He appears to have played an active if inconspicuous rôle in the negotiations for union between the Burghers and Antiburghers in 1819/20, and thereafter in the United Secession Synod. He had been an equally active member of the old Associate Synod, and took a hand in the arguments which racked the Burghers from 1795 onwards, and culminated in the split between Old Light and New Light in 1806 (a

16 A. Lothian, *Charity to the Poor and Afflicted, the Duty and Interest of the Prosperous: A Sermon preached at the Desire of the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Sick, on Sabbath, January 1st, 1797* (Edinburgh, 1797).

17 Lothian, *Christian Patriot*, 25.

controversy which the Court of Session, after a patient hearing, found itself quite unable to comprehend). On one occasion, in 1797, Lothian recorded a solitary Dissent, counselling a policy of forbearance and patience while standing resolutely on the side of the New Light.

It was out of this episode in the 1790s that the elderly Dr William Porteous, of the Established Church, attempted to make capital in the neurotic years of the French Revolution and treason trials, by accusing the Seceders of disaffection towards the government. He received a dusty answer from Lothian's colleague Dr James Peddie in a pamphlet which is still a delight to read for its sustained irony.¹⁸ Dr James Hall, another Burgher minister in Edinburgh, actually managed to cash in on the situation by going to Robert Dundas the Lord Advocate in the greatest secrecy in 1797, and offering to act as "agent" for the government among the Seceders. Hall drew a regular £300 a year for "expenses" until 1807, when the new Prime Minister, Spencer Percival, put a stop to it: a rather discreditable angle on the first moderator of the United Secession presbytery which has not previously been brought to light.¹⁹ Lothian's contribution was confined to circulating copies of his friend Dr Wardlaw's witty and scurrilous poem, *Porteousiana* which provoked discreet guffaws in Secession manses.

Far from living in an ecclesiastical backwater, Lothian was very much part of the Edinburgh scene. He enjoyed attending the annual King's birthday dinner in the Parliament House, and he dined with the Portsburgh magistrates at convivial gatherings in the Archers' Hall. He was on cordial terms with the local magistrates, and in 1820 they offered to turn out in full regalia to escort the Burgher synod from Lothian's church to the first meeting of the new United Synod—an offer which had tactfully to be declined for fear of upsetting both the establishment and the Antiburghers (to

18 W. Porteous, *The New Light Examined; or, Observations on the Proceedings of the Associate Synod against their own Standards* (Glasgow, 1800). J. Peddie, *A Defence of the Associate Synod against the Charge of Sedition* (Edinburgh, 1800).

19 Cf. n. 8 above. Robert Dundas was Lord Advocate at the time, and was convinced that the Secession clergy were "notoriously disaffected". In 1795, some of the leading ministers sought a secret meeting with him and pledged their support to government; and as proof of their good intentions undertook to procure a loyal address from their brethren (which Dundas duly forwarded to the Home Secretary). Hall's activities as a secret agent extended to England and Ireland, but H. W. Meikle (*Scotland and the French Revolution*, 1912) seems to have been unaware of this episode (so, needless to say, were Hall's colleagues). George Hill, as leader of the Moderate Party, reported direct to Henry Dundas on the activities of other "loyal" Secession clergy who deserved discreet recompense from government (Edinburgh University Library, Laing MSS., II, 500).

whom magistrates were as red rags to a bull). In 1827, he received a personal invitation from the lord provost to attend the laying of the foundations of the South and West Bridges "with Masonic Honours", and to take part in the civic procession and dinner afterwards. Lothian replied with alacrity and promised to be there. A bulky file of press-cuttings show Lothian continuing to take an active interest in current affairs up to the time of his death. Copies of *The Times* announcing Trafalgar and Waterloo are there, together with blood-curdling accounts of the Burke and Hare affair, the arguments for and against the proposed new imperial weights and measures, the Corn Laws, the perils of permitting "Combinations" of working men, the fuss in the town council over the new roads and bridges in the '20s, and a host of other public concerns.

At the same time, Lothian found it possible to complete the education which had been curtailed in his youth. Annually he renewed his card of admission for the university library, and from 1803 to 1814 he attended classes at the college as a sort of extra-mural student every winter session. This was the university's "Golden Age", and Lothian took full advantage of what was offered: chemistry and pharmacy, materia medica and the practice of medicine (under Dr Gregory, who seems to have been a family friend and on one occasion sent Mrs Lothian a gift of Talavera wheat), anatomy and surgery (under Monro), mathematics (Sir John Leslie), political economy (Dugald Stewart), natural philosophy (Playfair), moral philosophy (Thomas Brown), dietetics and natural history (by this time Lothian was fifty-two); and then after a long gap, two years before his death, he enrolled for Thomas Chalmers' theology class. His four sons were also students at the college throughout most of the same period, and it is touching to think of the paterfamilias and the boys converging on the lecture-rooms of some of the most eminent teachers in Scotland's history. Lothian certainly prided himself on his medical knowledge, which he regarded as an important part of his pastoral equipment; and during his father-in-law's last illness he presided over the cupping, dosing and purging of the old gentleman to the considerable annoyance of the local doctor.

It was this combination of pastor, amateur physician, perpetual student and solid citizen which made Lothian an obvious choice as tutor and guardian to a succession of students from England. Many clergy and professors turned an honest penny by offering board and lodging and a paternal eye, at a time when English parents were sending their sons to the Athens of the north; and the Lothians could offer a respectable and godly family milieu. For some years a certain David Hastie boarded with the Lothians, while his father resided on the island of St Helena. Lothian collected a total of £550, and assured the anxious father that his son was "an esteemed

inmate of our family—He remains the same diligent student and well behaved young gentleman that he has ever been”, and adds that he has enrolled him “as a member of the Edinburgh Subscription Library which gives him access to many excellent books and to the chief of the periodical publications, and to a genteel and comfortable lounge near the College”.

From 1807 to 1810, no less a person than William Wilberforce entrusted a young protégé named John Gordon Smith to the Lothians. Wilberforce was evidently the boy’s guardian, and footed the bills for his medical training in Edinburgh. Lothian kept detailed accounts which shed interesting light on the expenses of a middle-class student. In October 1810, for example, in addition to class fees, accounts from shoemakers, tailors, hatters, mercers etc., there was washing to be paid for (14/10½), a new umbrella (13/-), pocket money for the quarter (£4. 9s 5d) and a guinea for “insurance against ballot for the Militia”. Wilberforce queried the accounts, and received a dignified but sniffy reply from Lothian, pointing out that inflation made it inevitable that charges should be higher than in the previous year. He claimed that he had not made any profit out of the transaction, and prudently got Smith to sign the accounts as a true record. It is pleasant to record that Smith dedicated his medical dissertation, *De Asthmate*, to Lothian and remained a friend of the family. Years later he wrote to Lothian’s eldest son giving him news, commending a friend who was about to visit Edinburgh, and sending fond greetings to all at Lauriston Place.²⁰

Whether or not Lothian skimmed a modest profit from his student lodgers, and despite his early struggles, the family was comfortably off. Starting on a stipend of £100, which rose to £210 by the year of his death, he brought up a family of five children. He complained at one time of the expense of sending four sons to the High School and college, and was admittedly much helped by Mrs Lothian’s father and brother. The former, who died in 1818, gave the Lothians a total of £205 between 1813 and his death, as well as a loan of £100 to be cancelled on his demise, and £50 each to his grandchildren, James and Margaret. The family received a certain amount under the will of Lothian’s brother-in-law, though this was contested by another relative and involved them in an expensive law-suit in which they employed Francis Jeffrey as their advocate. In the summer of 1812, Lothian was able to afford a gold watch,

20 Smith’s fate was sad (*Dictionary of National Biography*). After graduating in 1810 at Edinburgh he served as a surgeon with the British army at Waterloo, and under the pseudonym “J.J.” left an amusing account of his experiences. After publishing several pioneering works on medical jurisprudence, he was appointed first professor of the subject at London University in 1829. His Edinburgh medical degree was not recognised in England, and no students took his course. He died in a debtor’s prison in 1833, after fifteen months’ confinement.

for which he paid £26; and in 1819 he had it cleaned and repaired at a cost of 8/-. In 1826 Mrs Lothian seems virtually to have refurnished the house from top to bottom. There is an account for £132 for curtains, carpets, bedding, blinds, a new table for the dining-room and a tea-table to match, forby tassels, curtain rings etc.

A few years later, Lothian was able to contrast his own situation with that of a Relief minister. Having occasion to attend the Relief Chapel near Blairlogie for Sabbath worship, he marvelled at the ability of the minister to manage on £50 a year, and commented tartly on the fact that though the congregation numbered about 250 and appeared comparatively wealthy and well put on, the church itself was shabby and the minister down-at-heel. "Had he preached no better than he is paid", observed Lothian, "probably we should have heard him only in the forenoon—he did *middling* well".

So far, little has been said about the other members of Lothian's family, but it is they who reflect the attitudes, social status and "image" which a Secession minister evidently felt it proper to fit them for in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Here, certainly, there is evidence of a move up the social scale. The date of Lothian's marriage to Margaret, daughter of James Hogg of Lumphinnans has not been discovered, but they were a devoted and happy couple who wrote to each other affectionately whenever apart. They met thanks to Margaret's brother Alexander, who had been taught by Lothian and later became a notary in Kinross. In 1807 he was appointed procurator-fiscal of Kinross, and sheriff-clerk in 1814. He remained a staunch supporter of the family, and assisted Lothian's second son through his own legal studies with a gift of £210; and in 1821 young Alexander dedicated his dissertation "*avunculo suo dilecto*" when he qualified as an advocate. Alexander Hogg never married, and left his entire estate to Mrs Lothian and her family.

James Hugh Lothian, the eldest son, died only three months after his father. By then a prosperous Writer to the Signet, he spent some time in London in the 1820s as agent for a committee which was considering the building of a railway from Leeds to Edinburgh. Shares, bonds and trusts are discussed at length, together with reflections on the possibility of "manufactures" in Ayrshire. J. H. Lothian had a taste both for business speculation and for literature. The latter side of his nature is reflected in a common-place book of poetry (mostly Byron and Cowper) and some effusions of his own. One, written against the French in 1813 was published in the *Morning Chronicle*; another, affecting but regrettable, was composed at his father's death-bed. His father was proud of him and preserved a letter written from Dollar in 1817. It is a callow

young man's attempt to be literary and clever, detailing the hardships encountered on the ferry across the Forth, and indulging in supercilious observations on the persons he had met and the hospitality he had received. He was evidently travelling with the lawyer to whom he was articled, and who was a captain in the Clackmannanshire Yeomanry Cavalry. When dining at their mess he was the only person present who remained sober—or so he chose to assure his father. A few days later he was staying with Dr Mylne, the Church of Scotland minister at Dollar, to whom he refers as "the parson"; and one is not surprised to hear that Mylne, when faced with such a young pup as James Hugh, was somewhat "sour" at the dinner-table.

The second son, Alexander or Alec, was known in the family as "the Philosopher". He began his studies at Edinburgh University in 1812, and shone particularly in the various branches of mathematics. A folder containing his class exercises has survived, marked with almost uniform approval by Professor Nichol. Alec shared his family's fondness for verse and tried his hand at composition, but (more modest than his elder brother) inscribed it "Trash" and scored most of it out. A feminine acquaintance sent Alec's sister a fulsome encomium on his poems, and seems to have set herself to ensnare the heart of their author, but it was in fact to the law that Alec turned his attention, and he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1821.

The family now had two lawyers in its bosom, and they also had an amateur theologian. For many years Alec laboured at his "Examination of the Mosaic Record and other Philosophical Narratives and Allusions of the Bible", subtitled "Evidences of the Unerring Truth of the Scriptures". In 1842 he wrote to a friend, asking him to try to arrange a meeting with one of the Blackwood family, hoping to persuade him to undertake publication. "My object", he wrote, "is to give evidences, by illustrations borrowed from all the different branches of secular science, of the inspiration of the Sacred Volume. . . . With the exception indeed of a number of very useful and interesting works which have been written for the purposes of meeting the insidious attacks of a sceptical Geology, the wide field of Bible philosophy has been left in a great measure unexplored up to the present". Messrs Blackwood thought otherwise, and the volume never saw the light of day. At a later date, Alec again attempted to get into print with "Two handsome Post Octavo Volumes, Price One Guinea", entitled "The Deluge Traced to its Origin in the Fall of Man, and the Curse then denounced against the Earth". The author proposed to show that, whereas geologists had amply demonstrated that fossils revealed the existence of organic life on earth before the Flood, the Deluge had comprehensively wiped out any traces of

antediluvian man, thus reconciling the “existing opinions of Geologists . . . with the views derivable from the Sacred Writers”. Printed subscription-forms were circulated, but once again there seem to have been no takers and “The Deluge” never appeared—if in fact it was ever written. Alec died in 1854.

The third son, John, was what would have been called a “projector” in the eighteenth century, and he seems to have had much in common with the White Knight. He, too, attended the college between 1816 and 1819, and did well in mathematics and the sciences, gaining prizes in geography and a glowing testimonial from Sir John Leslie. His will, dated June 1846, describes him as “Geographer and Map Publisher”. In 1831, he applied to Lord Melbourne for appointment to the dormant post of Geographer Royal for Scotland, and supported his application with recommendations from his former preceptors. Sir John Leslie wrote enthusiastically of his work. Lord Jeffrey seconded the request, but it came to nothing.

Besides maps, John Lothian published a useful little *Table to find the Number of Days between Two Dates* (1839) and offered ten sovereigns to anyone who found an error in it. *Lothian's Time Reckoner* and *Tables for Computing Compound Interest* were among his ingenious productions, and in 1836 he won the silver medal of the Society for Arts for Scotland for his invention of an “Equable-flow Cock for Bottling Liquors, without disturbing the sediment in the cask”. He was highly commended by the same society for his entry in a competition to devise an alphabet for the blind; and he patented gadgets for weighing meat, reducing the friction on waggon-wheels, and spinning flax. He also had his lighter moments. A season-ticket for *The Jolly Beggars* survives, bearing his name. Towards the end of his life his financial affairs seem to have become embarrassed, and a letter from an old family friend, Dr Symes of Bridport, speaks sadly of “many a fair promise . . . wreck'd on that rock of speculation”. He died in 1846.

There remain yet two Lothians. “Wee Andrew”, who became an S.S.C. and died c. 1870, and his sister Margaret who kept house for her mother in George Square after her father's death. Little is known of Andrew, except that he inherited his father's sense of fun and had a happy talent for caricature which he exercised on scraps of paper at the expense of his family and acquaintances. He had several sons, one of whom, Thomas Rainer Lothian, served in the army, wine and dined in Paris, attended convivial Burns-night gatherings, and left behind an extensive collection of note-books containing racing-tips, starting prices and pedigrees. All this seems far removed from the Secession piety of his grandparents.

Something of that piety—and certainly a natural sweetness and goodness—shines through the few surviving letters of Lothian's

only daughter, Margaret. She was devoted to her four brothers, acting as their confidante in affairs of the heart (she was not above sending and receiving a chaste valentine herself) and she teased them when they were pompous. On a visit to her uncle and aunt in Kinross in 1821, she is found asking Alec to send news of her pet bird, her rabbits and her flowers (temporarily in the care of Andrew), requesting James to bring some money with him (as she had to buy a new sash to wear to a party) and regretting that she had not packed her worsted stockings.

In September 1823, she accompanied her eldest brother James to Ayr, where he was attending the court, and sent home a humorous account of the lamentable sufferings she had endured on the journey. James had made a muddle about the days when the steamer sailed from Largs to Ayr, and after a cold and rough passage from Greenock to Largs they were compelled to disembark and hire a post-chaise for the rest of the journey. James grudged the money, and managed to exchange it for a hideously uncomfortable "noddy" at Irvine, which was 3d a mile cheaper. They arrived at Ayr at 2 a.m. After breakfast Margaret sat down to write letters while James went off to the Court; but was then informed by the innkeeper that the room had been let to Lord Gillies' nephew, who had just arrived. Philosophically, she set off to look for lodgings in the town, and having settled herself down yet again, managed to complete this "full, true and particular account of these my disasters", which she surmised would provoke most un-paternal and un-fraternal merriment in the Lothian household. She was evidently a girl of spirit and resource; and one likes to picture her, well advanced into the reign of Queen Victoria, as one of those inimitable Edinburgh aunts who are not yet quite extinct. She died in the year of the Great Exhibition.

These vignettes from the family circle of a United Secession minister may perhaps do something to humanise the austere image of a section of the Scottish clergy who have not, on the whole, had a very flattering press. From humble origins and a rough sea-going boyhood in the reign of George III, the Revd Andrew Lothian died a learned, liberal and respected citizen of Edinburgh, having launched a family into the mainstream of nineteenth-century middle-class professional Scotland. The Writer to the Signet and the advocate were comfortably installed in Athol Crescent and Charlotte Square respectively. Two more sons were making names for themselves. All four had been put through the High School and university. He left a widow and daughter well provided for. He himself had been a faithful pastor, held in esteem by his flock in one of the poorer quarters of Edinburgh; and he had played a part in the life of his Church and his city which, though unspectacular, had been solid, sincere and worthy. The colleagues who wrote to

Mrs Lothian at his death could tell her nothing she did not already know: that her husband was a good man who would be greatly missed. This is perhaps as good a reason as any for briefly resurrecting him after a decent interval of some two hundred years since he first went to sea, "of a black complexion and wearing his own dark brown hair".